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NO. 358
APRIL
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BAT MAN
WHERE THE ACTION IS!
HANNIGAN & GIORDANO

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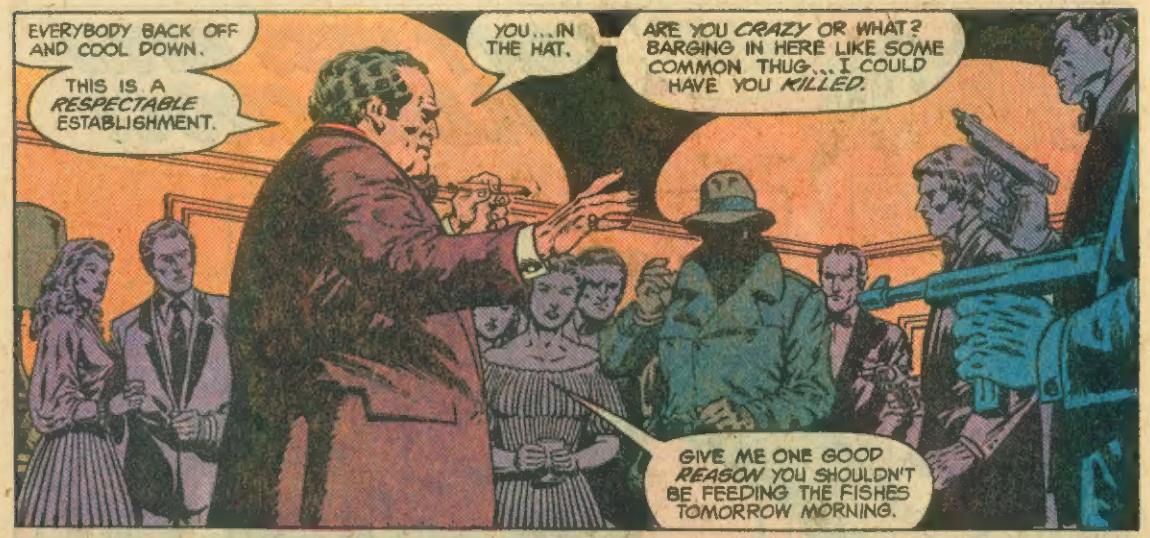

EVERYBODY BACK OFF AND COOL DOWN.
THIS IS A RESPECTABLE ESTABLISHMENT.
YOU...IN THE HAT.
ARE YOU CRAZY OR WHAT? BARGING IN HERE LIKE SOME COMMON THUG...I COULD HAVE YOU KILLED.
GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON YOU SHOULDN'T BE FEEDING THE FISHES TOMORROW MORNING.

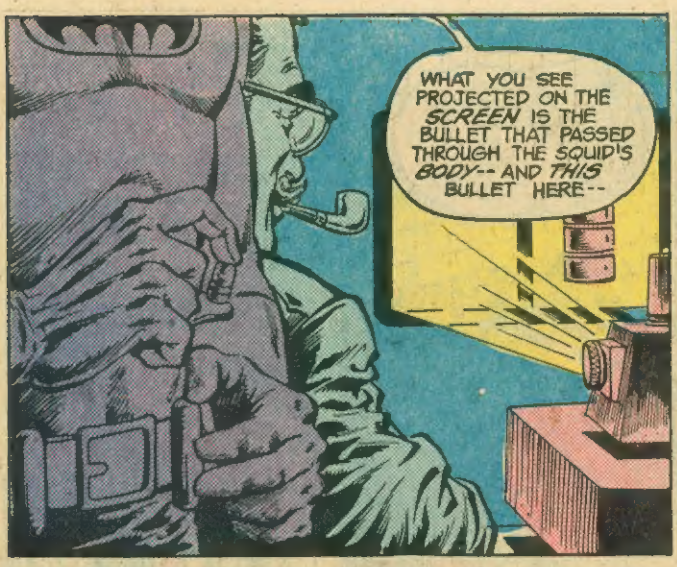
YOU'RE NOT STUPID, MISTER, SO WHY ACT DUMB?
A GUY NAMED RUPERT THORNE USED TO RUN THIS TOWN BEFORE HE WENT BERSERK AND SHOT HIS OWN HAND-PICKED COMMIS-SIONER OF POLICE!
ONCE UPON A TIME HE RAN THIS CLUB--THE TOBACCONISTS' CLUB--

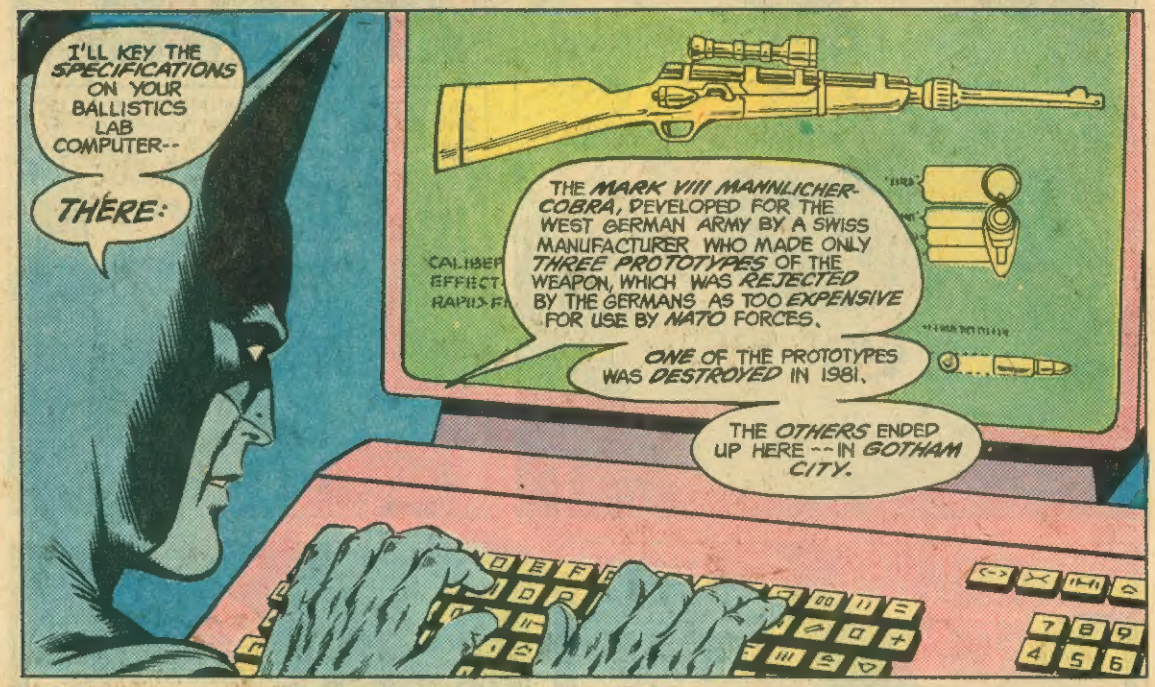
--A FRONT OPERATION FOR THE RICHEST AND MOST POWERFUL CROOKS ON THE EAST COAST.
SURE, YOU'RE RESPECTABLE --YOU'RE RESPECTABLE BECAUSE HOODS LIKE TONY FALCO RUN THE GANGS AND LET YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN.
WELL, THORNE AND FALCO ARE BOTH IN PRISON--FINISHED-- AND THAT LEAVES A POWER VACUUM HERE AT THE TOP.

THE SQUID TRIED TO FILL THAT VACUUM, BUT HE'S DEAD-- I KILLED HIM.
I'M HERE TO TELL YOU-- WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, I'M GOING TO TAKE OVER.
WITH YOU, OR WITHOUT YOU.
YOUR CHOICE.

STICK AROUND.
WE'LL TALK.

9:15 PM: THE GOTHAM CITY MORGUE...
LAWRENCE LOMAN, A.K.A. THE SQUID, ONE-TIME INTERNATIONAL SPY... WOULD-BE HEADMAN OF THE GOTHAM CITY UNDERWORLD...
...NOW JUST ANOTHER SUBJECT FOR THE CORONER'S KNIFE.
ANY QUESTION ABOUT THE CAUSE OF DEATH, DOCTOR?
NONE. A BULLET THROUGH THE HEART--FIRED FROM AT LEAST A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, JUDGING BY THE AMOUNT OF TISSUE DAMAGE.
HE MUST HAVE DIED INSTANTLY.
JUST THE ONE BULLET--?
ONLY ONE ENTRY AND ONE EXIT WOUND, BATMAN.
WHATEVER FIRED THE BULLET THAT KILLED THE SQUID--AT THAT DISTANCE, AND THAT VELOCITY--MUST BE AN INCREDIBLY HIGH-POWERED WEAPON.
THANK YOU, DOCTOR.
THAT CONFIRMS WHAT I TOLD YOU THIS MORNING, COMMISSIONER.*
I SEE WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT, BATMAN.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A VERY SPECIAL KIND OF RIFLE.
AS YOU SAID, FIND THE RIFLE--AND WE'LL FIND THE SQUID'S KILLER!
*IN DETECTIVE #524, TO BE PRECISE -- Len.
EXACTLY.
I ALREADY RAN A COMPARISON SEARCH ON THIS BULLET WE FOUND, USING THE CRIME COMPUTER IN THE BATCAVE.
LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I FOUND.
3





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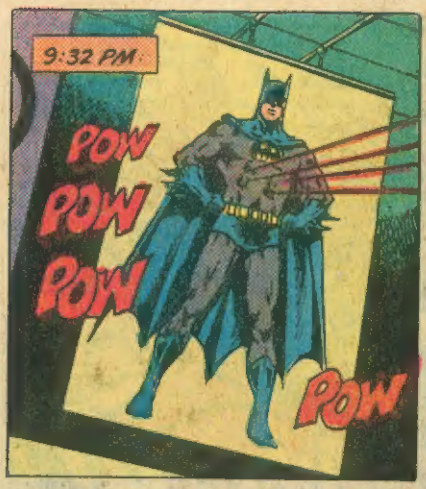
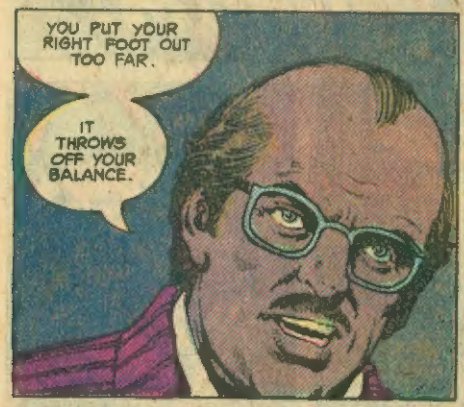

9:32 PM.
POW
POW
POW
POW

NICE PIECE, SPECS.
GOTTA TELL YOU, THOUGH, IT PULLS A LITTLE TO THE LEFT.
IT'S NOT THE GUN, BRUNO. IT'S THE WAY YOU STAND.


YOU PUT YOUR RIGHT FOOT OUT TOO FAR.
IT THROWS OFF YOUR BALANCE.

LISTEN TO THE MAN, BRUNO.
WHEN IT COMES TO GUNS, NOBODY KNOWS MORE THAN SPECS.
OKAY, OKAY, SO LET'S SEE HOW WE SCORED.

KEEP YOUR TEMPER, BRUNO.

WHRRRR
AFTER ALL, IT'S JUST TARGET PRACTICE.

IT'S NOT AS IF YOU WERE SHOOTING AT THE REAL--THE REAL--
OH MY GOD.
C'MON, SPECS, BRUNO DIDN'T DO THAT BAD.
NEXT TIME--

THERE ISN'T GOING TO BE A "NEXT TIME," PUNK.
YAAAH!
CRAK!
THIS SHOOTING GALLERY IS CLOSED DOWN--
--PERMANENTLY!
GOTTA RUN!
WHAM!
TOO LATE! HE GOT GUNNER AND BRUNO-- NOW HE'S AFTER ME!
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT THAT SUPER-MARKET JOB, BATMAN--
POW
--BUT IT AIN'T MY FAULT THAT DAME GOT CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE!
TWANG
BTUMP
YOU'RE NOT PINNIN' THAT ONE ON ME!
ARR
WHY'D YOU HAVETA BREAK MY WRIST?
SHE WAS JUST SOME STUPID HOUSE-WIFE--
--SOME LOUSY DAME IN DYED HAIR-- WHO'S GONNA MISS SOME LOUSY--
I'VE GOT HIM--RIGHT IN MY SIGHTS! GOODBYE, BATMAN!
IAAA--
KRAK
6

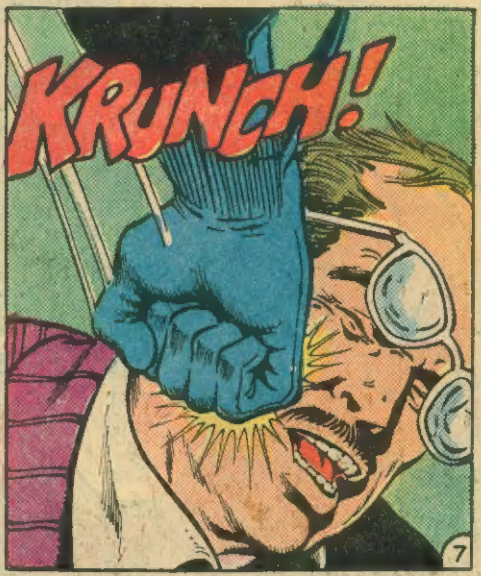
THAT'S RIGHT, BATMAN, RUN!
BUT NO MATTER WHERE YOU HIDE--

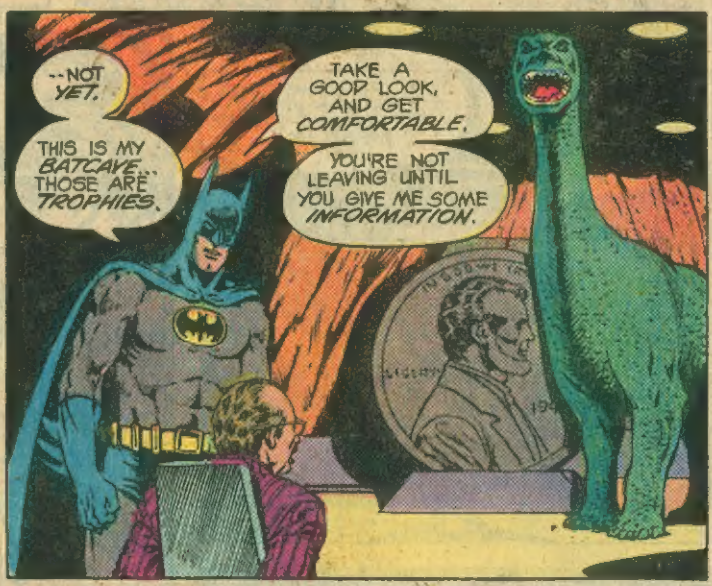
--THIS GUN CAN FIND YOU!
THE MARK VIII CAN PUNCH THROUGH METAL LIKE A KNIFE THROUGH SOFT CHEESE.
KARAAK
THIS TIME I WON'T MISS.

EVERYONE THINKS I'M JUST A LITTLE MAN WITH A DRIED-UP VOICE AND A TALENT FOR MAKING GUNS.
BUT I HAVE AMBITIONS, TOO. AND WHEN PEOPLE FIND OUT THAT I KILLED THE BATMAN...

OH NO.

OH, YES.


KRUNCH!



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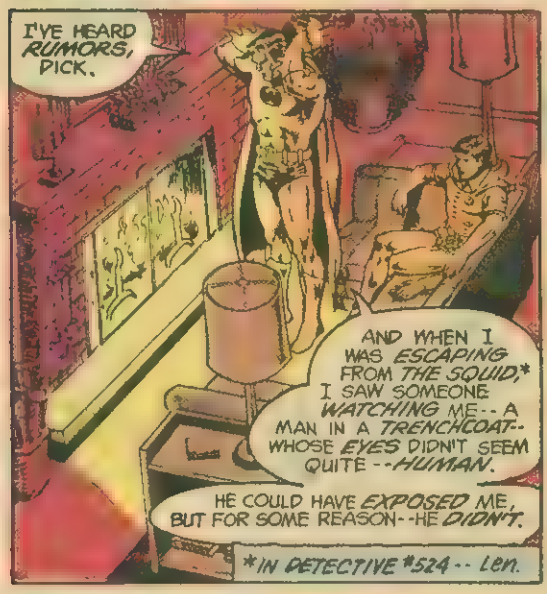
YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH IT.
I'LL TALK-- I'LL TELL--
REALLY?
HOW?
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
LOOK AROUND, SPECS.
NO ONE KNOWS YOU'RE HERE.
YOU'RE ALONE, SPECS.
THERE'S JUST YOU -- AND US.
YOU SOLD A GUN -- THE MARK VIII MANNLICHER-COBRA -- TO A MURDERER.
THAT MAKES YOU AN ACCESSORY.
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE A MURDERER, TOO.
I DON'T LIKE MURDERERS, SPECS.
NO... DON'T COME NEAR ME...
I'LL TELL... IT WAS CROC. HE BOUGHT THE GUN.
HE LIVES UP IN THE POINT, I SWEAR I DON'T KNOW WHERE.
PLEASE -- DON'T HURT ME -- I CAN'T STAND PAIN --
I CAN'T -- CAN'T --
SNORRRRE
CHLOROFORM. VERY NEAT.
BETWEEN YOU AND ME, BATMAN, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF HE HADN'T COME ACROSS?
9

THE SAME THING I'M GOING TO DO NOW, ROBIN--
--TURN HIM OVER TO COMMISSIONER GORDON AND THE POLICE.
I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, I'LL SAY IT AGAIN:
CRIMINALS ARE A SUPERSTITIOUS, COWARDLY LOT...

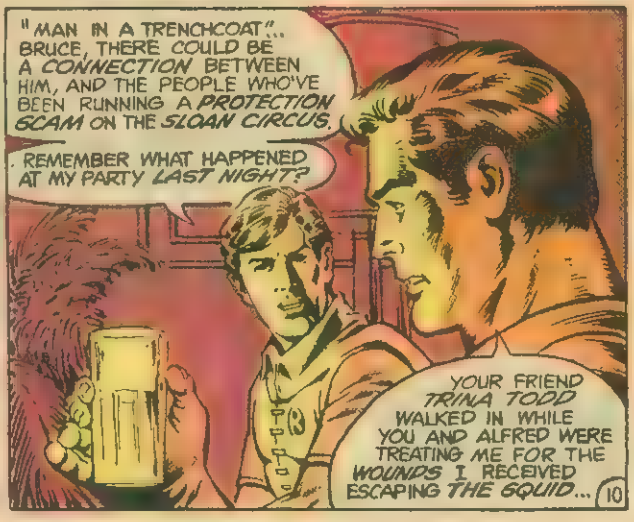
...MEN LIKE SPECS, WHO STAY IN THE BACKGROUND, MORE THAN MOST.
SPECS TERRORIZED HIMSELF. I NEVER EVEN THREATENED HIM.
CROC.
WHO OR WHAT IS CROC?


I'VE HEARD RUMORS, DICK.
AND WHEN I WAS ESCAPING FROM THE SQUID,* I SAW SOMEONE WATCHING ME-- A MAN IN A TRENCHCOAT-- WHOSE EYES DIDN'T SEEM QUITE --HUMAN.
HE COULD HAVE EXPOSED ME, BUT FOR SOME REASON--HE DIDN'T.
*IN DETECTIVE #524 -- Len.

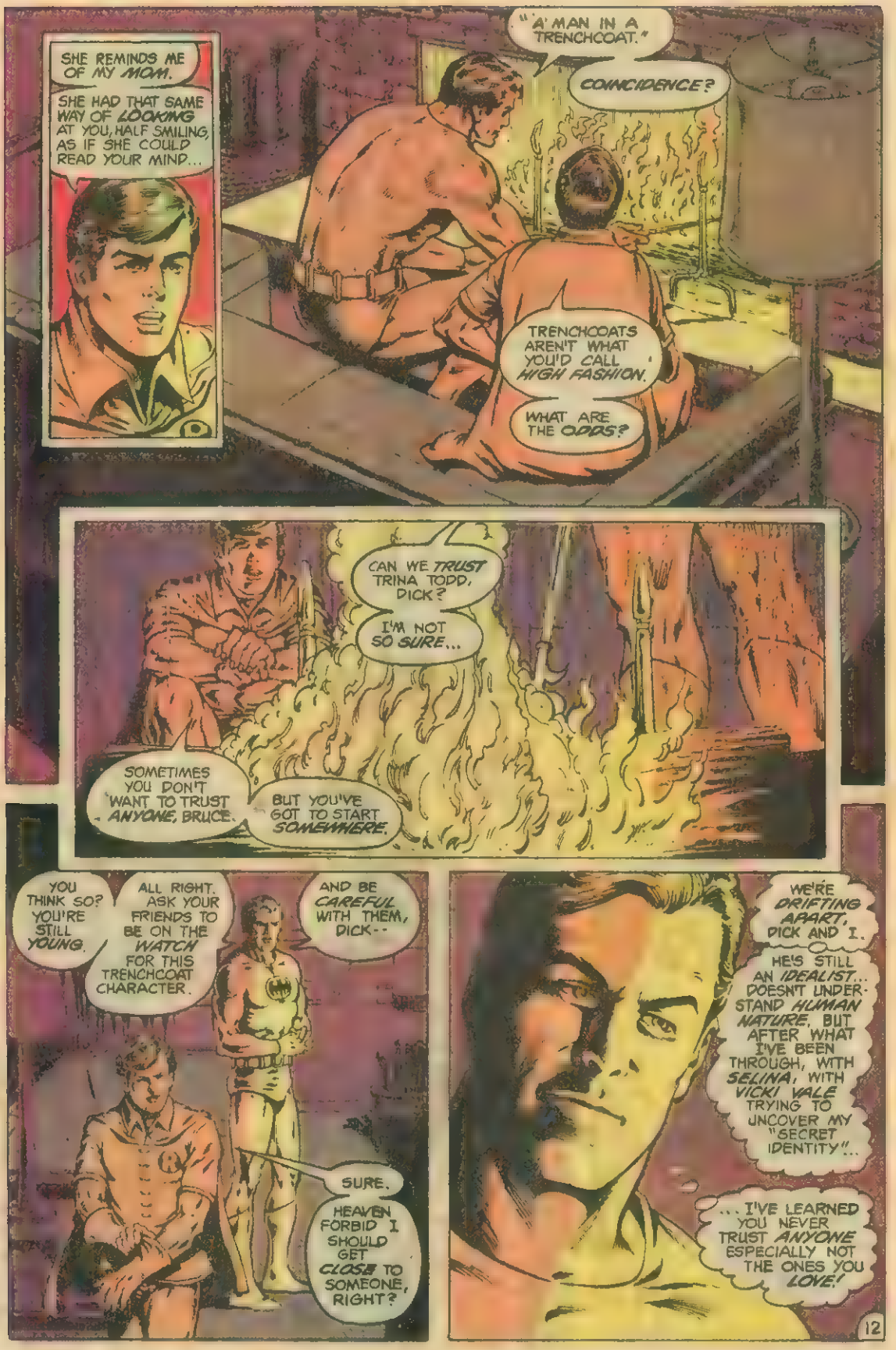
MASTER BRUCE, MASTER DICK...
MAY I SUGGEST REFRESHMENTS?

YOU MAY, ALFRED, AND THANK YOU. I'VE BEEN SO BUSY, EATING WAS THE FARTHEST THING FROM MY THOUGHTS.
WHERE WAS I? YES... IF CROC AND THAT MAN IN THE TRENCHCOAT ARE THE SAME MAN--

--THEN I'M FACING A CRIMINAL WHOSE MOTIVES ARE BEYOND COMPREHENSION.
WHY WOULD CROC LET ME ESCAPE THE SQUID'S TRAP-- AND THEN ASSASSINATE THE SQUID?

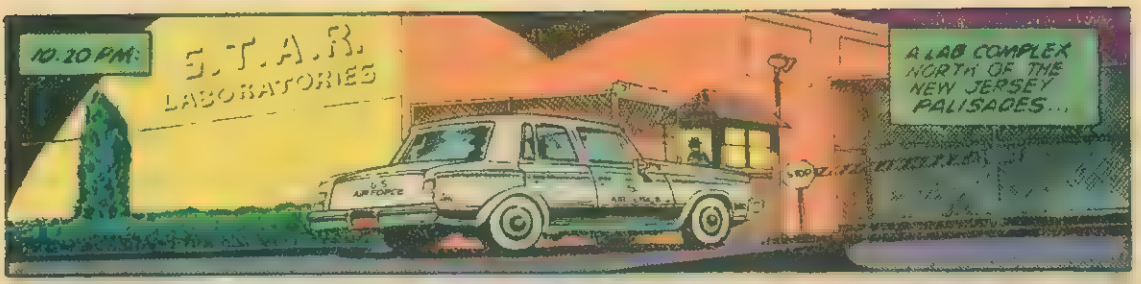

"MAN IN A TRENCHCOAT"... BRUCE, THERE COULD BE A CONNECTION BETWEEN HIM, AND THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN RUNNING A PROTECTION SCAM ON THE SLOAN CIRCUS.
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED AT MY PARTY LAST NIGHT?
YOUR FRIEND TRINA TODD WALKED IN WHILE YOU AND ALFRED WERE TREATING ME FOR THE WOUNDS I RECEIVED ESCAPING THE SQUID...

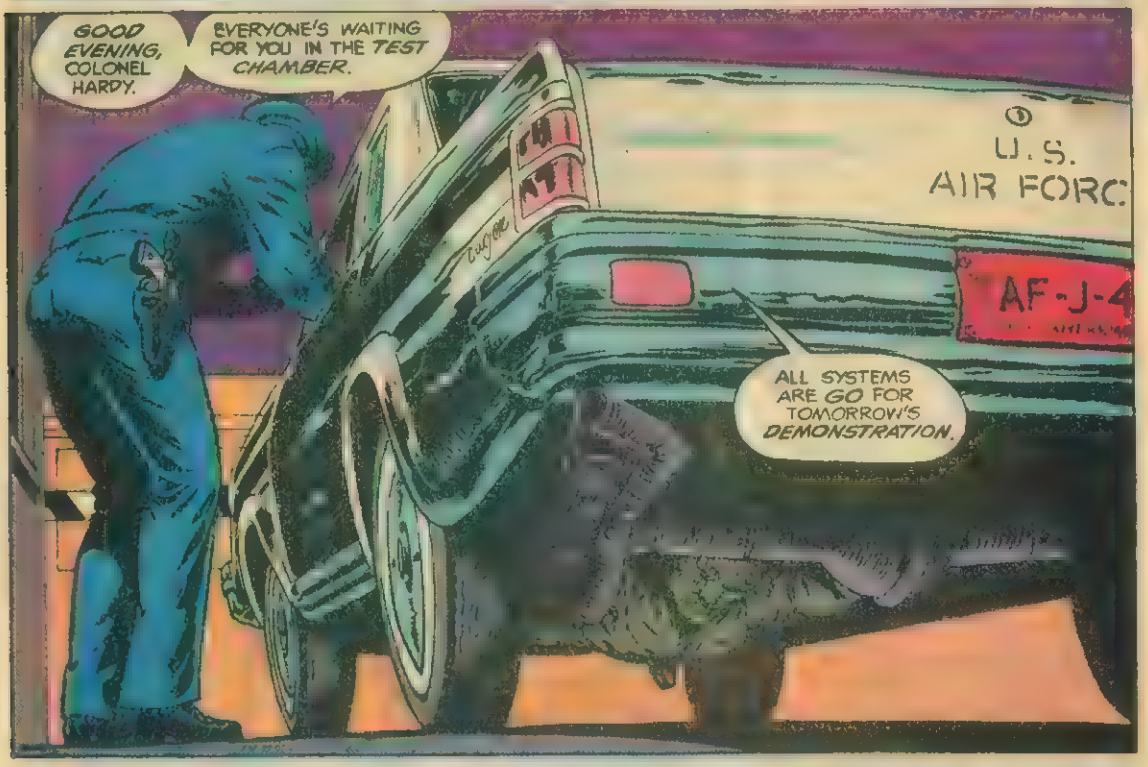
THAT'S RIGHT-- AND SHE SAW YOUR COSTUME.
NATURALLY, I FOLLOWED HER RIGHT OUTSIDE, TRIED TO PUT HER OFF WITH SOME COCKAMAMIE STORY, BUT SHE'S ONE SMART LADY...
I SAW WHAT I SAW, DICK.
THOSE WOUNDS ON YOUR FRIEND BRUCE WAYNE WEREN'T MAKE-UP.
THEY WERE REAL--
--WHICH MEANS THE COSTUME HE WORE IS ALSO REAL.
BRUCE WAYNE IS THE BATMAN--AND SO YOU MUST BE ROBIN!
TRINA...
OH, DON'T LOOK SO UPSET, DICK--YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME
WE CARNIES STICK TOGETHER, REMEMBER? HOW COULD I BETRAY DICK GRAYSON OF "THE FLYING GRAYSONS"?
YOUR PARENTS ARE A LEGEND IN THE CIRCUS WORLD...
...THEY WERE MY HEROES WHEN I WAS A GIRL. THEIR DEATHS SHOOK ME. I FELT LIKE I'D LOST MY OWN PARENTS.
TRINA, IF THERE'S EVER ANYTHING BRUCE AND I CAN DO--!
WELL THERE IS SOMETHING. SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
GO ON.
A FEW DAYS AGO, TWO MEN CAME TO THE CIRCUS. THEY THREATENED MR. SLOAN, OUR OWNER.
THEY WANTED MONEY... FOR AN "INSURANCE POLICY," THEY SAID...
TELL ME EVERYTHING.
"SHE DID. DESCRIBING TWO MEN, ONE OF THEM A BIG GUY IN A SLOUCH HAT AND A TRENCHCOAT; I PROMISED HER WE'D LOOK INTO IT... BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE THE OLD PROTECTION GAME, SOMETHING FOR THE POLICE, NOT US.
'NOW I'M NOT SO SURE.
"I'LL TELL YOU, BRUCE. TRINA TODD IS ONE HECK OF A WOMAN..."
11


SHE REMINDS ME OF MY MOM.
SHE HAD THAT SAME WAY OF LOOKING AT YOU, HALF SMILING, AS IF SHE COULD READ YOUR MIND...
"A MAN IN A TRENCHCOAT."
COINCIDENCE?
TRENCHCOATS AREN'T WHAT YOU'D CALL HIGH FASHION.
WHAT ARE THE ODDS?
CAN WE TRUST TRINA TODD, DICK?
I'M NOT SO SURE...
SOMETIMES YOU DON'T WANT TO TRUST ANYONE, BRUCE.
BUT YOU'VE GOT TO START SOMEWHERE.
YOU THINK SO? YOU'RE STILL YOUNG.
ALL RIGHT. ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO BE ON THE WATCH FOR THIS TRENCHCOAT CHARACTER.
AND BE CAREFUL WITH THEM, DICK--
SURE.
HEAVEN FORBID I SHOULD GET CLOSE TO SOMEONE, RIGHT?
WE'RE DRIFTING APART, DICK AND I.
HE'S STILL AN IDEALIST... DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HUMAN NATURE. BUT AFTER WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH, WITH SELINA, WITH VICKI VALE TRYING TO UNCOVER MY "SECRET IDENTITY"...
... I'VE LEARNED YOU NEVER TRUST ANYONE ESPECIALLY NOT THE ONES YOU LOVE!

9:38 PM:
OKAY, WE'VE TALKED.
YOU SAY YOU WERE A BIG MAN IN TAMPA.
WE'LL CHECK THAT... NOT THAT I THINK YOU'RE LYING...
I'M NOT.
...BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT. LET'S SAY YOU WASTED THE SQUID. SO WHAT?
YOU SAID YOURSELF, HE WAS A LOSER.
WHAT WE NEED IS PROOF YOU'VE GOT BRAINS TO RUN A MAJOR OPERATION.
MAYBE... A DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR TALENTS.
GOTHAM GAZETTE
STAR LABS TO
AIR FORCE COMPUTER
HERE.
THAT COMPUTER IS THE LATEST THING IN HIGH-TECH.
TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE, IT'D BE WORTH MILLIONS.
GET IT.
MISTER, I WAS BORN A FREAK-- I'VE HAD TO PROVE MYSELF TO CREEPS LIKE YOU ALL MY LIFE.
I COULD BREAK YOU IN HALF.
BUT THAT WOULDN'T GET ME WHAT I WANT...
SO I'LL STEAL YOUR CRUMMY COMPUTER.
AND THEN I'LL SHOVE IT DOWN YOUR FAT THROAT.
13

11:10 PM:
"THE POINT," GOTHAM CITY'S VERY OWN VERSION OF THE SOUTH BRONX, A HUNDRED ACRES OF BURNED-OUT BUILDINGS AND RUBBLE-STREWN LOTS--
--WHERE THE "HOPE OF TOMORROW" ARE THE NIGHTMARE CITIZENS OF TODAY...
HEY, BRUTHERS, IT'S THE MAN!
LET'S SHOW HIM A TIME!
I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR TROUBLE.
THE WORD IS, YOU HOODS RUN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
BELIEVE IT.
THE "KNIGHTS" RULE. NOBODY COMES ON OUR TURF WITHOUT THEY GET PERMISSION.
THAT MEANS YOU, BAT-CREEP.
THEN YOU'D KNOW IF A MAN NAMED OROC IS LIVING HERE IN THE POINT.
AND YOU'D KNOW WHERE HE'S LIVING.
YOU DON'T LISTEN GOOD, DO YOU?
THIS IS OUR TURF, EARS.
WHEN STUDS TRESPASS ON OUR TURF, THEY GET HURT.
YOU'VE GOT THE DOWNTOWN LOSERS SCARED, MAN, BUT NOT US.
YOU'RE TRESPASSIN'--!
GET 'IM!
14


10:20 PM:
S.T.A.R. LABORATORIES
A LAB COMPLEX NORTH OF THE NEW JERSEY PALISADES...


GOOD EVENING, COLONEL HARDY.
EVERYONE'S WAITING FOR YOU IN THE TEST CHAMBER.
U.S. AIR FORCE
AF-J-4
ALL SYSTEMS ARE GO FOR TOMORROW'S DEMONSTRATION.

EXCELLENT.
ONE THING, SOLDIER. HAVE THE MOTOR POOL CHECK THIS VEHICLE'S MUFFLER.
U.S AIR FORCE
I WAS DRAGGING EVER SINCE WE LEFT THE MAIN RO--
15

10.29.1991
GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT FOR OUR PRE-DEMONSTRATION TESTS, HARDY.
JUST SHOW YOUR ID CARD TO THE SCANNER, AND I'LL SIGNAL YOU THROUGH TO THE MAIN LAB.
FINE.
COME RIGHT ON IN.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, COLONEL. WE-- HEY!
WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?
THOSE MEN-- ONE OF THEM IS COLONEL HARDY.
THEN THAT MEANS YOU'RE--
--AN IMPOSTOR.
HOW PERCEPTIVE YOU ARE.
BUT NOW THAT I'M PAST YOUR DEFENSES, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
WHAK!
HE'S AFTER THE COMPUTER!
I'VE GOT TO SHOOT--
YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE, LITTLE MAN.
BUT YOU DIDN'T MOVE FAST ENOUGH.
AAHHH!
KTOW!
NO ONE EVER DOES.
16

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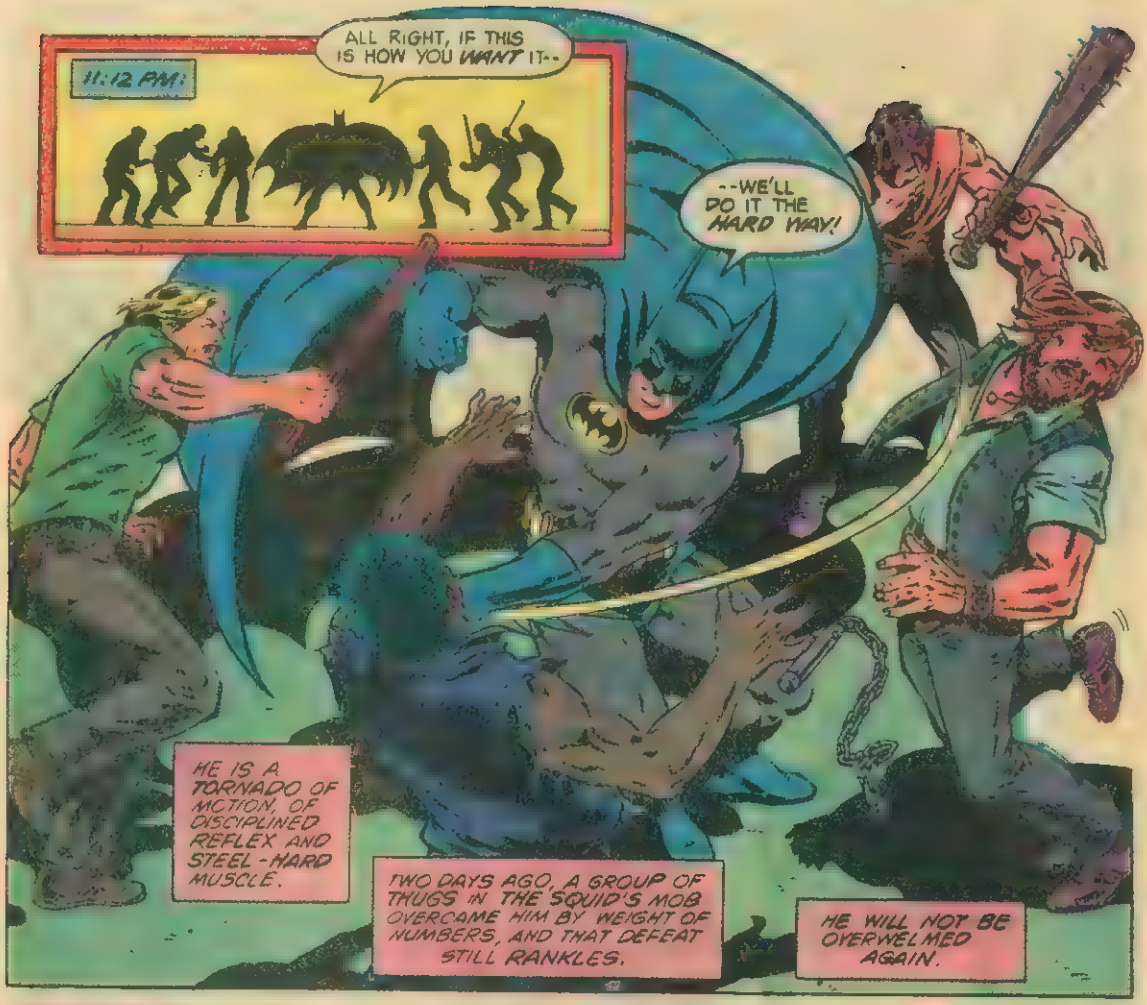
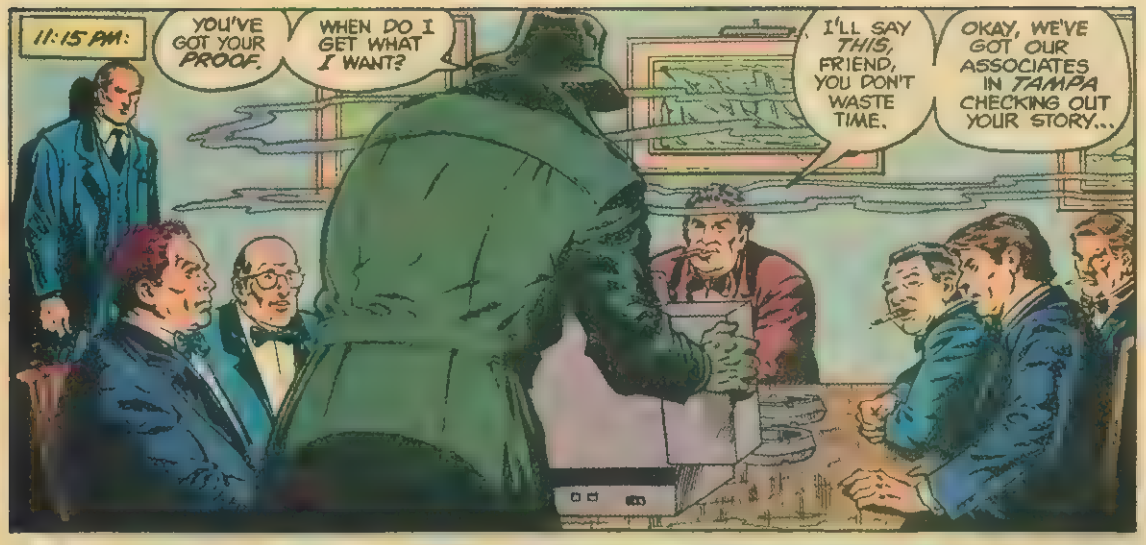

11:12 PM:
ALL RIGHT, IF THIS IS HOW YOU WANT IT--
--WE'LL DO IT THE HARD WAY!
HE IS A TORNADO OF MOTION, OF DISCIPLINED REFLEX AND STEEL-HARD MUSCLE.
TWO DAYS AGO, A GROUP OF THUGS IN THE SQUID'S MOB OVERCAME HIM BY WEIGHT OF NUMBERS, AND THAT DEFEAT STILL RANKLES.
HE WILL NOT BE OVERWELMED AGAIN.

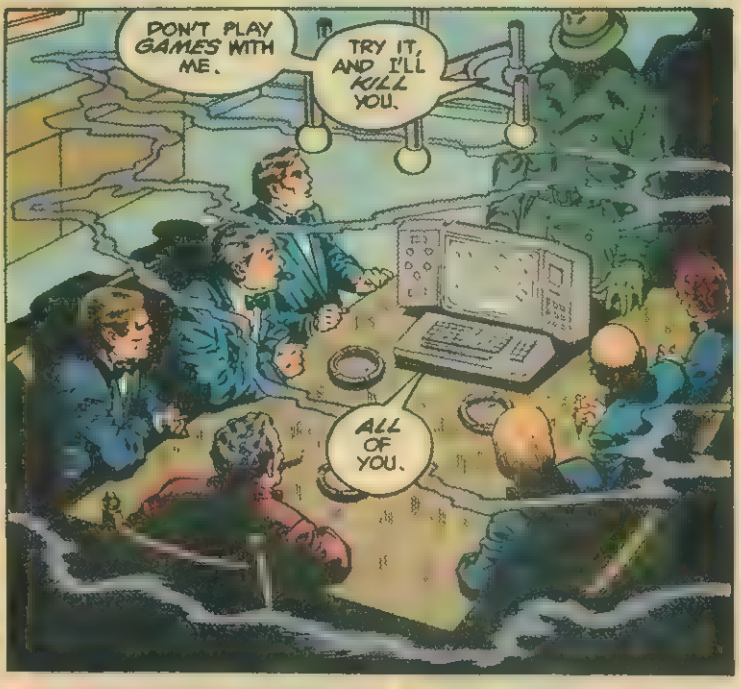
WE CAN KEEP THIS UP ALL NIGHT, IF YOU WANT--

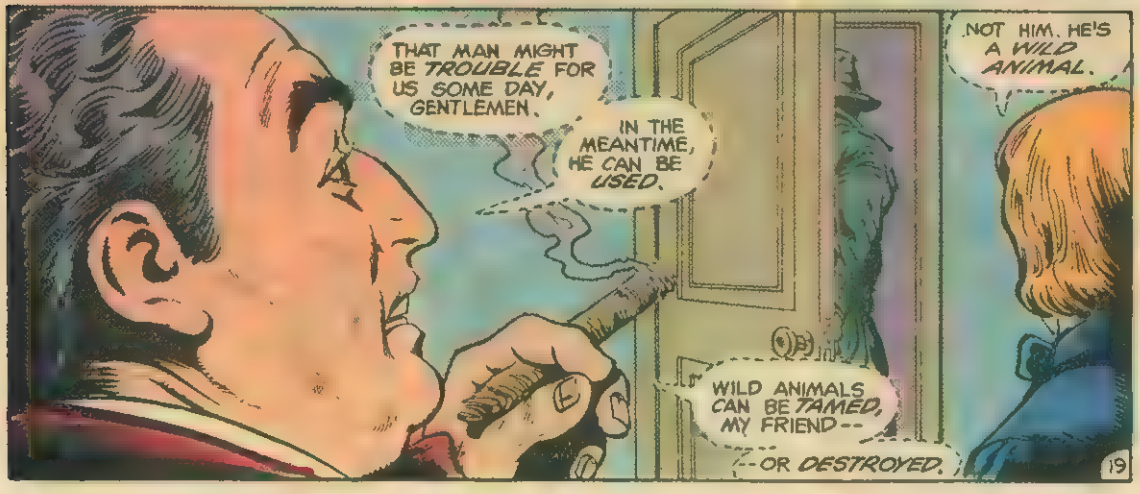
--BUT WHAT I WANT IS INFORMATION.
CROC. WHERE?
OKAY, OKAY!

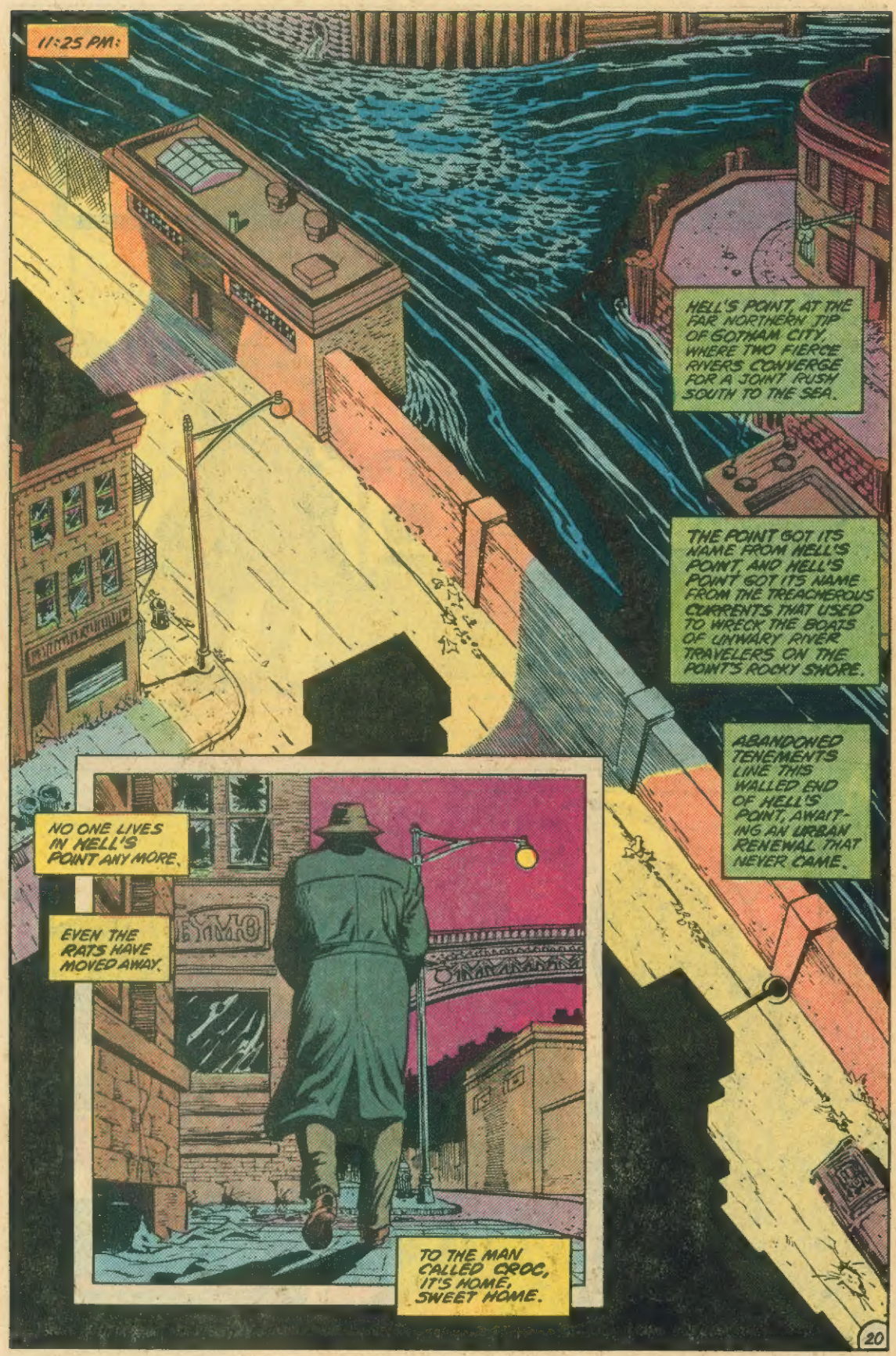
YOU TWO DESERVE EACH OTHER... YOU'RE BOTH FREAKED-OUT!
WE GAVE HIM A TIME, TOO, AND HE ALMOST WASTED US!
I'LL TELL YOU WHERE TO FIND HIM-- I'LL TELL YOU--

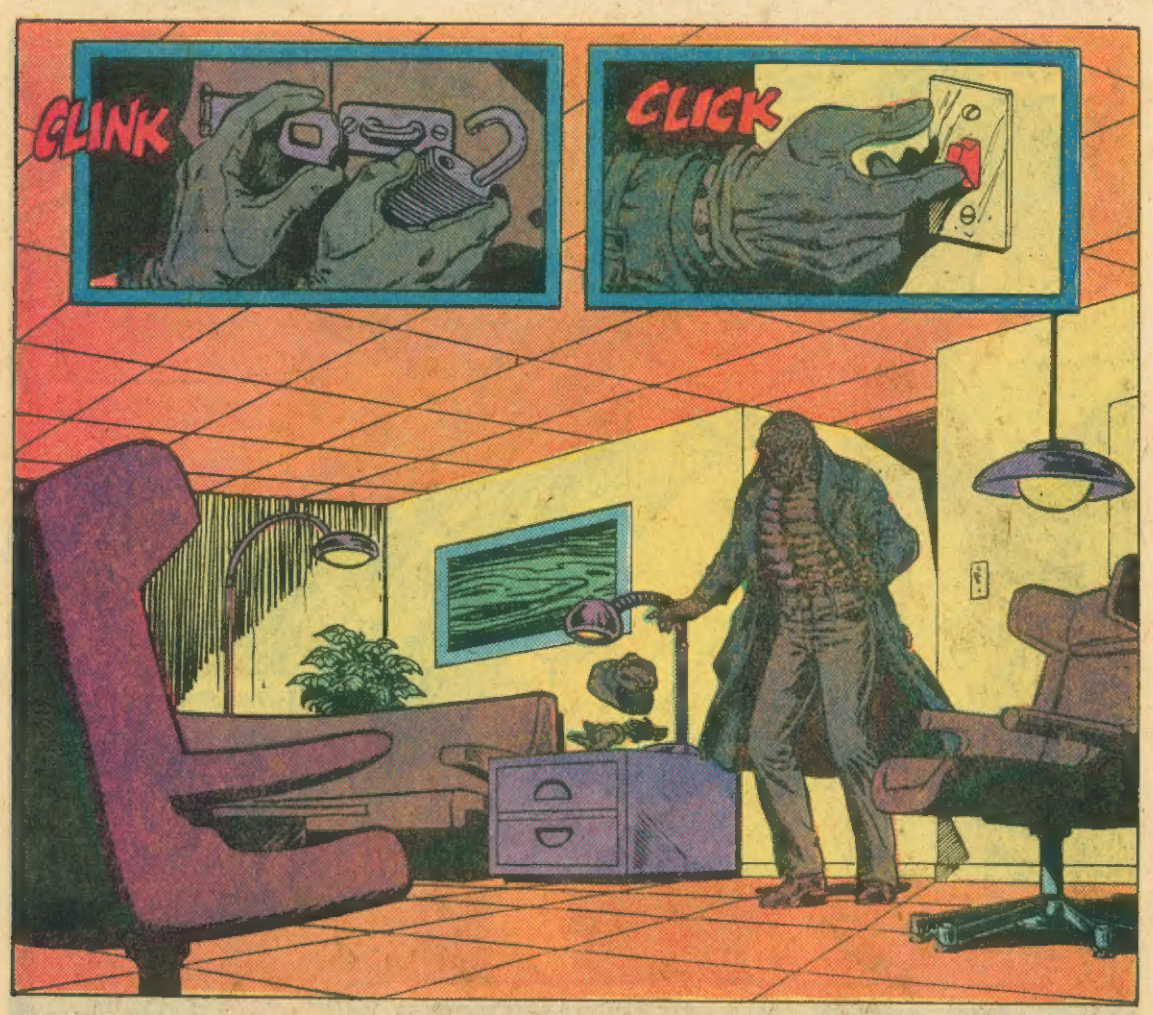

11:15 PM:
YOU'VE GOT YOUR PROOF.
WHEN DO I GET WHAT I WANT?
I'LL SAY THIS, FRIEND, YOU DON'T WASTE TIME.
OKAY, WE'VE GOT OUR ASSOCIATES IN TAMPA CHECKING OUT YOUR STORY...

...AND THEY'LL BE GETTING BACK TO US LATE TOMORROW.
ONE THING:
TILL THEN, LET'S SAY YOU'VE GOT OUR BLESSING-- ON A PROVISIONAL BASIS.


DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME.
TRY IT, AND I'LL KILL YOU.
ALL OF YOU.


THAT MAN MIGHT BE TROUBLE FOR US SOME DAY, GENTLEMEN.
IN THE MEANTIME, HE CAN BE USED.
NOT HIM. HE'S A WILD ANIMAL.
WILD ANIMALS CAN BE TAMED, MY FRIEND--
--OR DESTROYED.


11:25 PM:
HELL'S POINT, AT THE FAR NORTHERN TIP OF GOTHAM CITY, WHERE TWO FIERCE RIVERS CONVERGE FOR A JOINT RUSH SOUTH TO THE SEA.
THE POINT GOT ITS NAME FROM HELL'S POINT, AND HELL'S POINT GOT ITS NAME FROM THE TREACHEROUS CURRENTS THAT USED TO WRECK THE BOATS OF UNWARY RIVER TRAVELERS ON THE POINT'S ROCKY SHORE.
ABANDONED TENEMENTS LINE THIS WALLED END OF HELL'S POINT, AWAITING AN URBAN RENEWAL THAT NEVER CAME.
NO ONE LIVES IN HELL'S POINT ANY MORE.
EVEN THE RATS HAVE MOVED AWAY.
TO THE MAN CALLED CROC, IT'S HOME, SWEET HOME.



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DAMN YOU!
THIS WAS MY PLACE, MY SPECIAL PLACE!
LORD! DIDN'T EXPECT SUCH FURY!
THOSE PUNKS WERE RIGHT--LIKE A MADMAN--!
BUILT THIS PLACE--MY HOME--NOBODY COULD CALL ME A FREAK HERE!
BUT YOU'VE SPOILED IT--
THUNK
ALL RUINED!
--YOU RUINED IT!
ALL SPOILED!
RUINED!
KPOW!
BLAWHOOM
22

NEXT: *IN THE PAGES OF DETECTIVE #525* **"KILLER ON THE LOOSE!"**